03 Food safety and nutrition procedures

**03.2 Food for play and cooking activities**

Some parents and staff may have strong views about food being used for play. It is important to be sensitive to these issues. For example, children who are Muslim, Jewish, Rastafarian, or who are vegetarian, should not be given any food to play with that contains animal products (Gelatine). Parents’ views should be sought on this. In some cases, it is not appropriate to use food for play at all, particularly in times of austerity.

* Food for play may include dough, corn flour, pasta, rice, food colourings/flavourings.
* Jelly (including jelly cubes) is not used for play.
* Food for play is risk assessed against the 14 allergens.
* Staff are constantly alert to the potential hazards of food play, in particular choking hazards and signs of previously undetected allergies.
* Pulses are not used as they can be poisonous when raw or may be a choking hazard.
* Dried food that is used for play is kept away from food used for cooking.
* Foods that are cooked and used for play, such as dough, have a limited shelf life.
* Utensils used for play food are washed thoroughly after use.

**Children’s cooking activities**

* Before undertaking any cooking activity with children, members of staff check for allergies and intolerances by checking children’s records.
* Children are taught basic hygiene skills such as the need to wash hands thoroughly before handling food, and again after going to the toilet, blowing their nose or coughing.
* The area to be used for cooking is cleaned; a plastic tablecloth is used.
* Children wear aprons that are used just for cooking.
* Utensils provided are for children to use only when cooking, including chopping/rolling boards, bowls, wooden spoons, jugs, and are stored in the kitchen.
* Members of staff encourage children to handle food in a hygienic manner.
* Cooked food to go home is put in a paper food bag and refrigerated until home time.
* Food play activities are suspended during outbreaks of illness.